

SUMMER | 2019

# BOLD

INSPIRATION FOR TRAVELLERS

ESCAPE

UNWIND

RECHARGE

CANADIAN SUMMER!  
TALES FROM THE NORTH



# OPEN WATER, OPEN MIND

ON AN EXPEDITION CRUISE ALONG CANADA'S ATLANTIC COAST, **VAWN HIMMELSBACH** KNEW SHE HAD TO PACK FOR ADVENTURE; THE RICH HISTORY AND WELCOMING CULTURE CAME ALONG FOR THE RIDE



The lighthouse at Cape  
Spear is not far from  
Newfoundland's capital.



# “So

be easy and free, when you're drinking with me, I'm a man you don't meet every day....” I'm listening to musician Alan Doyle of Great Big Sea—but not on Spotify. He's sitting across from me in a Zodiac bobbing on the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by a massive fjord that juts into the wild, windswept coast of southern Newfoundland.

While he's singing a folk tune called “Jock Stewart,” the lyrics seem oddly appropriate, since it's not every day I'm sitting in a Zodiac drinking champagne with a Canadian legend. It's not an experience I could have planned or booked in advance; it was just one of those random things that happen when you're on an expedition cruise.

Doyle is one of the artists-in-residence on Adventure Canada's Newfoundland Circumnavigation, an up-close-and-personal experience of the land and its people. The family-owned Canadian expedition tour operator has been curating signature adventures since 1987, and now sails into the world's most remote destinations—the Canadian Arctic, the fjords of Greenland and the isles of the North Atlantic—aboard the ice-strengthened, 198-passenger vessel Ocean Endeavour.

That “Zodiac moment” is one of the latest trends in luxury travel, where it's less about thread counts and top-shelf booze and more about access to the inaccessible. And that's what you'll get on an expedition cruise—although the exact “what” is something you can't predict. It requires an open mind and a sense of adventure.

Prior to boarding the Ocean Endeavour, I noticed the itinerary was somewhat vague, though it included visits to three UNESCO World Heritage sites: L'Anse aux Meadows, the only authenticated Viking settlement in North America, Gros Morne National Park and Red Bay's Basque Whaling Station in Labrador. Plus, there was a stop at Saint-Pierre, a last bastion of

France's colonial territories in North America.

Other days, we'd be landing somewhere along the coast, anchoring in harbours of remote outpost communities or in bays surrounded by untouched wilderness. With an expedition cruise, no two are alike. The itinerary is subject to change depending on the weather, wind and sea conditions. But this isn't a setback; it's an advantage, with unexpected highlights.

While I was excited to visit three UNESCO sites in as many days, I had never heard of Francois (pronounced Fran-sway). And I never would have found my way to this remote outpost community, with its smattering of colourful wooden houses clinging precariously to the rocky cliffs at the end of a two-kilometre-long fjord.

In this village of 100 people, there are no roads, not even cars (the locals get around on ATVs). The only way in and out is by boat or helicopter—the nearest road is four hours away by ferry, followed by a 900-kilometre drive to St. John's.

But after a day spent hiking to the top of the fjord for a 360-degree view of untouched wilderness, drinking champagne with Doyle and, later that evening, attending a kitchen party with the locals, complete with live music, dancing and plenty of beer, Francois turned out to be the unexpected highlight of my trip.

For Latonia Hartery, who grew up near Francois, this is one of her favourite spots on the island—in the world, for that matter. As our archeologist-in-residence, she's spent 20 years conducting excavations on Newfoundland's northern peninsula.

“Even though it's in my home province, [Francois] is still one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen on Earth—this giant fjord and this little town clinging to the rocks, and then all these friendly and happy people,” says Hartery.

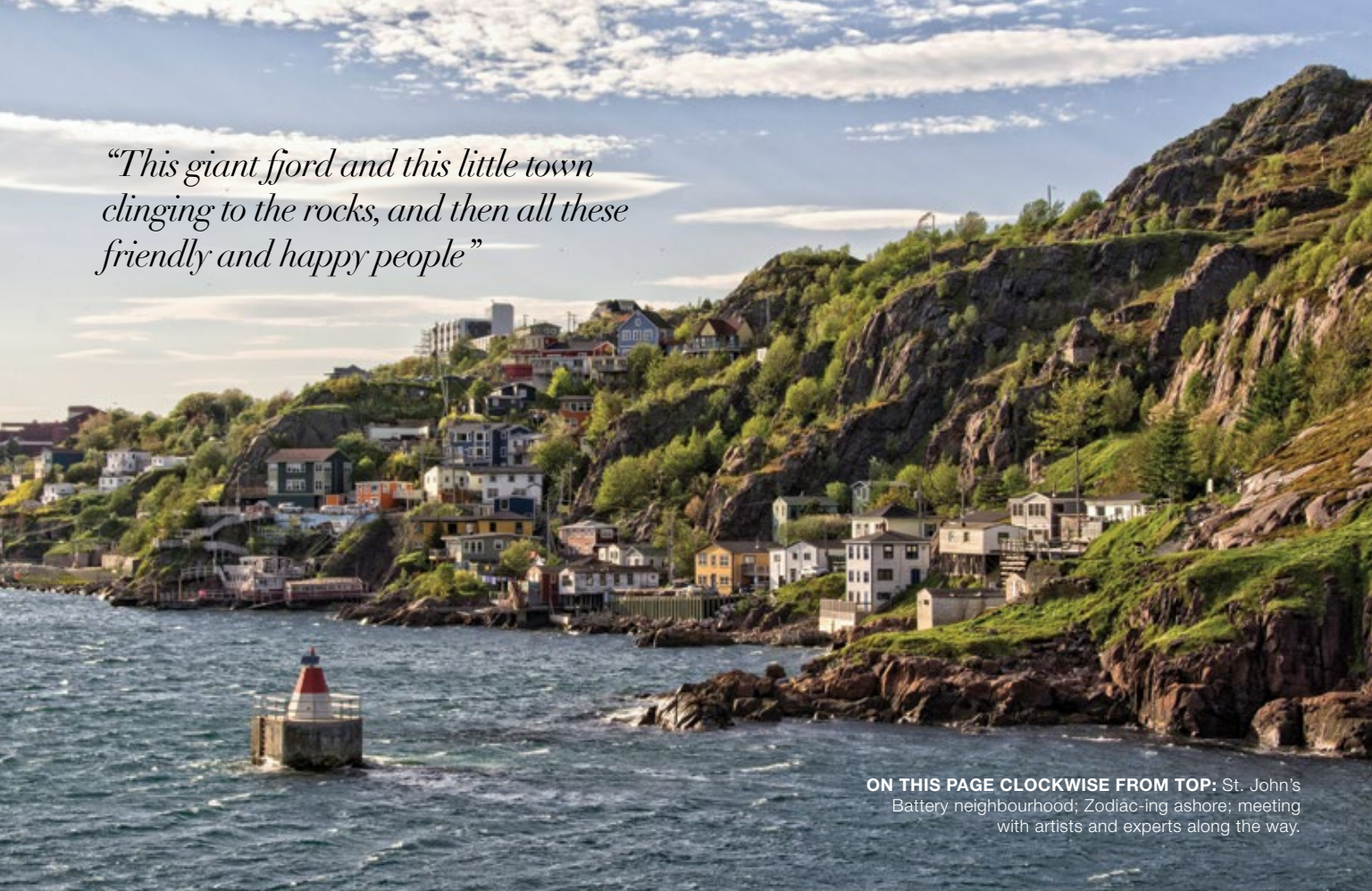


**ON THIS PAGE:** Aboard the Ocean Endeavour, fjords, rugged cliffs and whale sightings are on the menu.





*“This giant fjord and this little town  
clinging to the rocks, and then all these  
friendly and happy people”*



**ON THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** St. John's Battery neighbourhood; Zodiac-ing ashore; meeting with artists and experts along the way.





“Some people take this trip just to go to L’Anse aux Meadows, and then they happen to find out all these amazing things about Newfoundland and Labrador along the way. That’s part of what makes a trip like this special,” she says. “I love where I’m from, I love the people who have grown up here with me, so it’s fun to sail around the island with 200 people who are just learning about it.”

Hartery is one of the many experts aboard the Ocean Endeavour, from naturalists and historians to musicians, artists and culturalists. And, like the expedition leaders who expertly navigate our Zodiacs through the choppy waters of the Atlantic, many are from around these parts and can provide a unique view of local culture, history and the land.

Like Paul Dean, our geologist-in-residence, who has a passion for ancient rocks. Before visiting the Tablelands at Gros Morne National Park, he tells us why it’s so significant (and why it’s a UNESCO site): This 600-metre plateau is where the Earth’s mantle was pushed up out of the ocean onto the continent 80 million years ago.

“There are very few places [on Earth] where you can see this in an accessible area,” he explains. “It’s a very spectacular place—if you don’t learn anything about the geology, you will be amazed with where you are on this planet.” He’s not wrong. You don’t need a passion for ancient rocks to appreciate the otherworldly beauty of the Tablelands.

Aside from onboard lectures, workshops and entertainment, daily excursions include everything from scenic hikes to painting lessons on the beach and photography lessons in coastal communities.

There are also a few surprises onboard, like the crew from Slow Food, who spend their days foraging in the bush and meeting with fisherpeople, farmers and distillers as part of their new Taste of Place program. The idea is to preserve biodiversity and local food traditions that have become marginalized by the industrialized food system. For passengers, that translates into pop-ups aboard the ship—sampling freshly caught cod or sipping craft cocktails with local gin.

On the last night, after a rousing game of Jeopardy where I learn the meaning of Newfoundland slang like “tiddly” and “bangbelly,” passengers slowly make their way back to their rooms, preparing to disembark in the morning after sailing the narrows into St. John’s harbour.

But there are still a few of us in the lounge. Some of the expedition leaders return from their rooms with musical instruments; a group sits in a circle, playing music, singing folk songs. The mood is mellow. We’ll all be saying goodbye tomorrow.

I came for the wild outdoors and magical vistas. I was looking for adventure—and I got that in abundance. But I unexpectedly made a few friends along the way.

## PROPERLY EQUIPPED

An expedition cruise requires a little more prep work than a regular cruise. Here’s how to prepare for adventure:

You’ll be provided with a comprehensive packing list. This isn’t just a guideline; gear may be required for certain excursions.

Bad weather can result in rougher waters, so be prepared with anti-nausea medication. If prone to seasickness, reserve a cabin toward the middle of the ship on a lower deck.

Most expedition ships use Zodiacs instead of tenders to get ashore, in which case you’ll need waterproof outerwear, since there’s a good chance you’ll get splashed.